ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION STRATEGIES FOR BOOSTING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN NIGERIA SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This paper discussed secondary education as well as governments' rationale for its establishment. The paper also discussed assessment and the various strategies for the assessment of teaching-learning processes at the level. Moreover, the paper discussed evaluation of teaching and learning, and the strategies that could be employed in executing evaluation in schools, with explicit key differences between assessment and evaluation highlighted. In all, the paper concluded that assessment and evaluation are vital procedures for boosting teaching and learning activities in secondary schools in Nigeria; and suggested that assessment and evaluation strategies be enshrined in the secondary school curriculum, teachers be regularly trained and re-trained in the art of assessment and evaluation; government and education ministries should provide the needed tools and instruments for implementing assessment and evaluation of the teaching-learning processes, and education inspectors should frequently visit secondary schools as to ascertain teachers' level of compliance with government policies on assessment and evaluation.

Key words: Assessment; Evaluation; Learning; Secondary schools; Strategies; Teaching.

1. Introduction

Secondary education is the conventional link between the primary and tertiary levels of education. It is the level of education designed for the training of young minds who at the time; undergo varying emotional, physiological and psychological changes. As cited in Molagun (2006); Taiwo (1985) defined secondary education as an institution where students are admitted after the satisfactory completion of their primary education as prescribed by the government education syllabi and curriculum. It is education received by children between ages eleven plus to fifteen or twenty two years. The secondary school is a means through which violence, chaos and conflict-oriented tendencies can be curtailed among students. It is also an avenue through which such social negative behaviours can be prevented or eradicated completely (Molagun, 2006).

The rationale for government establishment of secondary education especially in Nigeria according to Taiwo (1985) were:-

(a) To provide quality education for students regardless of their social background;

(b) To diversify the curriculum in meeting students' needs and in catering for their talents;

(c) To instill versatility, industry and self-reliance among students;

(d) To enlighten students on their duties, obligations and privileges as citizens of Nigeria;

(e) To teach, develop and project the Nigerian culture, languages and arts among students;

(f) To develop a sense of spiritual and moral values, integrity and uprightness among students;

(g) To raise citizens with high thinking ability, respect for the views and feelings of others and respect for the dignity of labour;

(h) To produce students who will foster the unity of Nigeria.

Learning can be referred as the process of knowledge, attitude and skills acquisition; involving behavioral changes in an individual. Students' learning is enhanced by their active involvement in the learning activity; providing positive reward reinforcements; stimulating fresh experiences among students; providing a rich and varied environment for learning; designing learning in a more structured pattern, and where the knowledge obtained is transferable and applicable (Gbamaja, 1991). Secondary school students learn a lot of subjects at the same time; as it can take the form of a regular or elective learning based on subjects.

The compulsory subjects are mandatory for all students in their different levels, whereas the elective ones are mandatory throughout the school year for those students who opt for them. Usually, in the Nigeria secondary school setting, students' learning is divided into the sciences, the social sciences, the arts and the commercials. Students aspiring to pursue a career from the aforementioned are to mandatorily enroll and attend the classes so planned. In all, a minimum of seven subjects and a maximum of eleven subjects are allowed for students.

The teacher is fundamental for the effective implementation of the curriculum. Teaching is an activity done deliberately in a specialized manner, leading to a positive changes on the learner (Dorgu, 2015); it is the art of instilling knowledge and an a way of helping learner obtain the right attitude and skills through a series of planned activities (Buseri & Dorgu, 2011). Awotua-Efebo (2001) defined teaching as an interface between a teacher and a student under the teacher's guide, in order to bring about the expected

change in students behaviour. For teachers to teach well, they should be guided the necessary rules or principles of teaching and learning, which will determines students' learning outcomes.

Teachers at the secondary school level teaches a number of different classes made up of students of different age groups, abilities, attitudes and experiences; and these teachers, more often than not, have the opportunity to teach subjects reflecting their area of interest and specialisation. Teaching according to Omieibi-Davies (2011) can bring about: increase in the understanding of and information on the subject matter, obtaining psychomotor skills, habits and abilities. For teaching and learning to be exciting, enriching and accessible, the teacher should be creative and hard working, funny, less demanding, inspiring and absorbing. A successful secondary school teacher should also be career driven, resilient, excellent time managers, who is able to work well under pressure either alone or as a team. Secondary school teachers are to possess the following skills, amidst others: be a relationship builder, excellent communication skills, be a good role model, be brilliant and intelligent, be versatile, be accommodating, be a problem solver, plan his or her teaching, be able to guild students in attaining the objectives of the subject matter, to mention but a few.

These teachers have a freedom with regards to achieving the set of educational goals by adopting any of these teaching methods: cognitive development methods (talk chalk/recitation method, discussion method, field trip/excursion method, questioning/socratic method, team teaching method); affective development methods (simulation method, modelling method, simulation games, role-playing method, dramatic method) and the psychomotor development methods (discovery method, laboratory/experimentation method, inquiry method, process approach method, project method, programmed learning method, demonstration method, Dalton plan/assignment method, mastery learning method, microteaching method). For learning and teaching to be effective and efficient, assessment and evaluation strategies must be entwined into it. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to expose the various strategies for assessing and evaluating teaching and learning activities in Nigeria secondary schools.

Assessing students' learning is significant in the teaching-learning process (Earl, 2012). It is a procedure for ascertaining the nature of teaching as well as directing the extent to which students achieve in their learning endeavours (Wiliam, 2011). According to Tulu et al. (2018), assessment as the process of measuring students' knowledge within a subject context through a quiz, test or assignments. It concerns how students perform at the end of an instruction (Mekonnen, 2014). Usually, classroom assessment is expected to promote additional improvement in student learning by factoring learning experiences and procedures during instruction; as classroom oriented assessments are likely to assist learners to know their areas of weaknesses and strengths (Linn & Gronlund, 2005). Assessment for learning is a more teacher-centered and provides a platform for determining how to improve students engagement, learning and performance (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall & Wiliam, 2007).

Assessment Strategies are techniques applied to teaching and learning activities and are for gathering information which can help teachers get the needed insight and feedback into their own teaching and that of students learning activities (Black & Wiliam, 2005). The role of assessment is to ascertain students' learning and a tool of reflection for teachers for the purpose of improving their teaching. The students' achievement information that is gathered from an assessment process, if accurate and valid, will be an advantage towards effective instruction while helping the teachers in providing appropriate feedback (Martínez, Stecher & Borko, 2009; Earl & Katz, 2006). Studies have shown that assessment of students is advantageous in encouraging them with taking up learning responsibilities, to be proactive about learning, fostering good interactions between them and their fellow students and teachers, providing opportunities for students' self and peer assessment, and helps students in understanding their next steps of learning (Mekonnen, 2014).

Assessment Strategies for Secondary schools

i.   Diagnostic assessment: This assessment provides information on the strengths and weaknesses of students within in a learning activity. The teacher can also apply this information in adapting to better teaching practices that meets students' needs. It provides school inspectors with information to understand the needs of the schools within their districts or locality, enabling them to provide relevant support to the teaching staff and for their professional development. The information can also be shared with students' parents with the aim of making them participate in the learning activities of their wards. Diagnostic assessment is sometimes referred to as pre-assessment.

ii.   Portfolio assessment: Portfolios refer to a collection of samples of student work from classroom activities and can document a broad range of students' competencies as they provide exact evidence of what a student knows and can do, rather than time-pressured tests. Portfolio assessment assists students in critically evaluating their work, abilities, growth and progress in learning.

iii. Formative assessment: A formative assessment is applied in the initial stage of instruction planning and development. It is aimed at monitoring students' learning for feedback purposes. It helps in identifying gaps in teachers' instructional plan. This assessment provides students with the timely, specific feedback that they need to make adjustments to their learning. It is also known as assessment for learning.

iv.   Summative assessment: Summative assessment measures the effectiveness of learning, how students react to the instruction and the benefits accruing from the teaching-learning activities. It is an assessment aimed at measuring the extent to which the teaching and learning objectives is achieved. It provides information about student achievement and it is also known as assessment of learning.

v.   *Confirmative assessment: Confirmative assessment is carried out after instruction and is to find out if the teachers' instruction technique is still a success after a given time frame such as term, a session etc. It is an extension of the summative assessment.*

vi.   *Norm-referenced assessment: This is assessment aimed at comparing students' performance against an average norm (e.g. national, state or local government norm). It could also be when a teacher compares the average grade of his or her students against the average grade of the entire school.*

vii.   *Criterion-referenced assessment: This assessment measures students' performances against a fixed set of predetermined criteria or learning standards. It checks what students are expected to know and be able to do at a specific stage of their learning.*

viii.   *Ipsative assessment: This is assessment in which a students' present performance is measured against his or her previous performances.*

ix.   Interim Assessment: This assessment is administered during instruction which is designed to evaluate students' knowledge and skills relative to a specific set of goals to inform decisions in the classroom and beyond.

x.   Peer and self assessment: This assessment is aimed at supporting students' metacognitive skills. It is a situation where students engage in measuring their prior knowledge while using it for new learning. Self-assessment helps students develop critical awareness and reflexivity (Dearnley & Meddings, 2007). Students use this information for making adjustments, improvements and necessary changes (Kajander-Unkuri, Meretoja, Katajisto, Saarikoski, Salminen, Suhonene, & Leino-Kilpi 2013). Peer assessment, on the other hand, is a process where individuals of similar status evaluate the performance of their peers and provide feedback, can also help students develop a critical attitude towards their own work and that of others (Mass, Sluijsmans, Van der Wees, Heerkens, Nijhuis-van der Sanden, & van der Vleuten, 2014)

Evaluation of teaching and learning activities in secondary school is also necessary for the efficiency of the educational system. It can take the form of teachers' appraisal, school and system evaluation. Evaluation can be defined as the process of determining the worth of a program or an intervention. The main rationale for evaluation is to proffer a valid and reliable judgment for decision making. Various strategies of evaluation are available depending on the information that needs to be assessed at any point in time. These are outlined below:

i.   Formative Evaluation: Formative evaluations are evaluations that occur during the process or implementation state of a program (e.g. a learning activity). These evaluations are used to measure how well the process is proceeding and if changes are necessary. It is a continuous, diagnostic and focuses on what and where students are doing well and areas where they need to improve in regard to their future performance (Gaberson, Oermann & Scellenbarger, 2015).

ii.   *Summative Evaluations: The summative evaluation occurs at the end of the program. The evaluation considers the effectiveness of the program as a whole and makes suggestions on how it can be improved. Summative evaluation summarizes how students have or have not achieved the outcomes and competencies stipulated in course objectives.*

iii.   *Process Evaluation: Process evaluations focus on how a program was implemented and how it operates. Its goal is to see if the program is meeting its intended goals. It shows why and how a program thrived or failed and whether such program could be replicated.*

iv.   *Impact Evaluation: Impact evaluations measure the program's effects and the overall effectiveness of realizing the goals of the program. It is implemented over a longer time schedule.*

v.   *Outcome Evaluations: Outcome evaluations measure the short-term impact of implementing programs. The evaluation gives information on how well the program is reaching its target audience.*

Differences between Assessment and Evaluation

The significant differences between assessment and evaluation are discussed below:

i.   Assessment entails collecting, reviewing and using information for the purpose of improving a current performance while evaluation is the process of passing judgment, based on a set criteria and evidence.

ii.   Assessment is diagnostic in nature as it tends to identify areas of improvement while evaluation is judgmental, as it aims at providing an overall grade.

iii. Assessment provides feedback on performance and ways to enhance performance in future while evaluation ascertains whether the standards so set are met or not.

iv. Assessment is to increase quality whereas evaluation is to judge the quality of a programme.

v. Assessment is concerned with process, while evaluation focuses on product.

vi. In assessment, feedback is based on observation but evaluation feedback relies on the level of quality as per set standard.

vii. In assessment, the relationship between the assessor and the assessee is reflective (internally defined), while in evaluation, the evaluator and evaluatee share a prescriptive relationship (Externally defined).

viii. Assessment criteria are determined by parties involved whereas in evaluation, the criteria are set by the evaluator.

ix. In assessment, the measurement standards are absolute, which seeks but comparative in evaluation (Surbhi, 2016).

2. Conclusion

Assessment and evaluation are vital procedures for boosting teaching and learning activities in Nigeria secondary schools. The various assessment and evaluation strategies as detailed in this paper can be applied in the assessment and evaluation of teaching-learning endeavours at the level. Teachers, learners and all other education stakeholders; should be familiar with the strategies for implementing teaching and learning assessment and evaluation.

In view of these, the paper hereby suggests that:

i. A vivid assessment and evaluation strategies be enshrined in the secondary school curriculum;

ii. Teachers be regularly trained and re-trained in the art of assessment and evaluation;

iii. Government and education ministries should as a matter of urgency, provide the various tools and instruments to the actual execution of teaching and learning assessment and evaluation;

iv. Officials and inspectors from the education ministries should make it a point of duty to always visit secondary schools in their states and districts as to ascertain teachers' level of compliance with government policies on assessment and evaluation.

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